The North Path Oracle

By Nina Bakanova

What This Deck Is About

The North Path Oracle is a universal tool for **navigating crisis**. No matter what kind — personal, relational, within a project, or in business — the deck helps you see which stage of crisis you're stuck in and what inner pattern is blocking your way forward. This is not divination. It's **diagnostics**, wrapped in visual metaphors.

Clarity. The North does not forgive illusions. Neither does a crisis: "It will sort itself out" is not an option.

Resilience. You cannot cancel the frost (or the crisis). But you can "dress for the weather"—accept the stages and go through them.

Humility before power. You cannot defeat a blizzard, but you can wait it out. You cannot break your patterns in an instant, but you can see them and transform them.

The North Path is not a battle. It is an art.

Why The North Path Oracle

Why This Oracle Came to Be

It wasn't born from a desire to create "just another oracle." It came from **personal experience**.

At 40, I found myself at a point where everything my life was built upon fell apart: a job I hated, relationships built on fear of being alone, the crushing sense of time lost. Wandering in this state took years. But I did find a way out.

And then I understood the main thing: a crisis is not chaos, **it's a Path**. It has stages, traps, and an exit. We simply don't have a map.

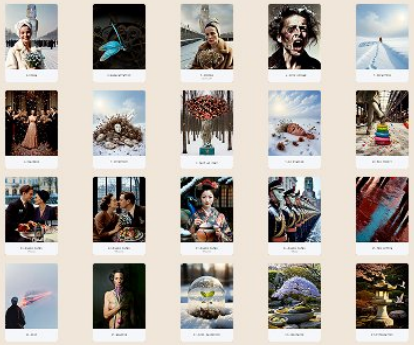
I thought: if such a map existed, no one would feel so alone and lost. After all, it's not the crisis that scares us, but the unknown. But what if the route was already charted?

So I created this map myself.

How It Works:
A Simple Two-Part System

The North Path (20 cards)

The Core of the Deck. The 20 cards are structured into **four archetypal cycles** that any deep transformation must pass through. These are not stages of "growth", but the seasons of the soul, shifting one into another in the harsh climate of crisis (1–5: Inside the System; 6–10: The Trial of Freedom; 11–15: The Backlash; 16–20: Second Birth).



The Panopticon (40 cards)

A collection of learned patterns, fears, and emotions that block development.

Function: Answers the question "What specifically is blocking me?"

Valuable Person

Comfort Zone

Exceptionalism

The three behavioral strategies that once helped us survive but now work against us

Black Sheep

Introjects, the derogatory labels we carry inside

Soma

Emotions trapped in the body

Not a Deck, But a Novel

The North Path is more than a collection of images — it's a living novel, tracing a heroine's journey of transformation.

She has a face, a character, a story. I created her by blending the image of Diana Vreeland with the memory of a woman from a Jewish quarter — and placed her in the 1930s–40s.

This era, to me, mirrors her inner state: a time when the individual is dissolved within the system. Her world suddenly collapses — and she must piece it back together, stone by stone.

The Panopticon captures the moments when the heroine stops being herself. It's like a hall of distorting mirrors she finds herself in again and again. In each mirror, she sees not herself, but a version that someone once invented for her.

Each Panopticon scenario draws from a distinct aesthetic:

Black Sheep — the gothic weight of Victorian England.
Valuable Person — an eclectic spectacle, assembled from Old Hollywood, the Belle Époque, and the era of Louis XVI.
Comfort Zone — the irony and "safe neurosis" of Woody Allen's style.
Exceptionalism — the theatricality and narcissism of Federico Fellini.
Soma — a series of emotions with living faces, some of whom have historical prototypes.

The Recurring Symbols

The Oracle contains symbols that move from card to card, evolving along the way. I call them 'recurring symbols.' They transform the deck from a collection of cards into a living organism. The same image — a blue forget-me-not, snow, a stone idol — appears again and again, gradually acquiring new meaning. It evolves alongside the heroine's inner world.

For the user, this means:

- The deck never grows old — it holds layers that reveal themselves over time
- A sense of dialogue emerges with a heroine who is also transforming
- Each symbol becomes a personal guide — one you want to follow

This is more than symbolism. It's a way to make the abstract visible — and someone else's experience, your own.

The Plant as a Symbol of Soul

One of the key recurring symbols in the deck is **The Plant**. It is a metaphor for the **Soul**. It begins as a cut bouquet and ends as a garden. In between lies the story of a soul that loses its roots, tries to survive in foreign hands, and one day decides to take root again. Below are some cards showing the evolution of the symbol.

1.DOGMA

The Plant appears as a freshly cut bouquet. It no longer has roots — its death is only a matter of time. She exchanges it for a sense of belonging and protection.

6.CRACKERS

The dead Plant as a gift. She seeks recognition, but receives an illusion — empty words, hollow smiles, withered bouquets. It looks like acceptance, but there is no sincerity in it, no life, no real resource.

9.SO FRAGILE

The withered bouquet lies abandoned in the snow — crushed beside a broken mask. The night storm finally wounded what had already been dead for a long time.

18.SOUL GARDENING

Under a glass dome, a green shoot grows — protected, but not hidden. The plant is no longer a severed bouquet or a withered gift. It has roots now, and soil, and a shelter built with care. For the first time, it belongs to itself.

The Idol as a Symbol of Imposed Rules

The Idol towers over the crowd. It embodies a system the person is part of — not by choice, but by design. Belonging to it is reflected in the symbols inscribed on the heroine's body and the headband she wears.

The heroine does not destroy the Idol — she tries to make sense of her new, incomprehensible reality through an old, familiar lens (a statue echoing the Idol, symbols carved into the trees). At the same time, she turns it into material for creation.

The Idol is replaced by a Tōrō lantern — a symbol of light, warmth, harmony, and spiritual awakening. This is the shift from the collective to the personal, the individual. The heroine finds her inner foundation and her own source of strength and knowing. Unclear symbols turn into a personal signature.

The Idol is the most important symbols in the deck. It represents life according to foreign, imposed standards: the pressure of family, society, expectations that erase individuality. These are deep, often unconscious patterns implanted in us by others. That is why the Idol is covered in illegible inscriptions — they carry no conscious meaning, yet they govern us from within.

The Idol is inseparable from **The Mask.** The Mask is the same set of rules worn on the face: pretense, something alien and imposed. The Idol and the Mask are the same symbol — shown in different aspects.

Here is its evolution across three cards.

Sample Card and Guidebook Entry

The 17th card from the "North Path" section

The Principle: A transition from judgment ("like/dislike"; "beautiful/ugly") to an exploration of one's physical, emotional, and symbolic texture as the raw material. Honest acceptance of oneself in all manifestations.

Symbolism:

Naked, not-young body: absolute honesty and vulnerability, shedding all social and psychological "costumes," returning to the zero point of identity.

Gray hair: traces of life's journey; acceptance of the external reality of time and hardship as an integral part of the personality.

Mandala on the skin: the manifested internal structure; a map of energy centers and psychological boundaries, a transition from chaotic self-digging to systematic self-knowledge.

17. MEASURE

Measuring tape with zodiac signs: a tool for measuring the parameters of the personality, connecting it with the archetypal and the cosmic.

Narcissus: a symbol of self-knowledge; the growth of truth from instinct (belly) to expressed word (throat).

Split light: acceptance of one's duality — light and dark, strengths and shadows — as wholeness, not conflict.

The Message: It's time to discover what lies beneath the covers. Allow yourself to be honest and authentic, even if imperfect. This is where the path to yourself begins.

The Action: Measure yourself today. Not "bad/good," but: what is my height? My weight? My temperature? My speed? Ask: "What facts about myself am I avoiding acknowledging?"

The Shadow: One can get stuck in endless self-digging: collecting tests, undergoing therapy, describing oneself with words — but never actually starting to live.

The lst card from the "Black Sheep" section

The Principle: The feeling of being a defective copy of an unattainable ideal; the conviction of one's own unfitness for a normal life, love, or belonging.

Symbolism:

Figure in a hospital gown: The feeling of being "wrong," in need of treatment or isolation.

Golden frame with a portrait: The image of an ideal (a parent, an ex, "successful success") that you feel you must conform to. It's as if it watches and judges your every move.

Srange body : A visualization of the thought: "I was assembled from spare parts that don't fit together."

Scalpels and cuts: Attempts to "fix" yourself —harsh self-criticism, self-harm, etc., just to become "acceptable."

Torn diaries: Devaluing your own thoughts and feelings .

Shabby room: The toxic environment inside your own head .

The Message: What you consider your "flaws" are actually your uniqueness. The problem isn't you, but that you're comparing yourself to someone else. You're trying to live up to the ideal you have in your head. But you don't have to be someone else's copy. You are the original version of yourself.

The Action: Take the portrait off the wall. At least in your imagination. Stop asking yourself, "Am I good enough for him/her/this job?" Ask instead: "What do I want?" The tools of self-flagellation won't make you better; they only wound you.

The Shadow: Caution! There is a temptation to make your "ugliness" your new identity. The truth is, you are neither a monster nor a failure. You're just a person who forgot they have the right to be themselves.

The 2nd card from the "Valuable Person" section

The Principle: Total self-objectification. You've learned to survive by becoming "food" for others — pleasing, serving, anticipating their hunger before your own. Your identity is replaced by your function.

Symbolism:

Roasted head on a platter: You don't just give part of yourself. You offer your mind, your essence, your very self to be consumed.

The smile: The horror is — you're not suffering. You're proud. Being eaten means being wanted.

Perfect presentation (apples, wine): People-pleasing disguised as virtue. You mistook your survival strategy for your personality.

The Message: You've mastered the art of pleasing others so completely that you now do it automatically, without a second thought.

2.THE PEOPLE PLEASER

But your worth isn't defined by how well you serve. You are not a meal. You are an individual—with your own personality, your own story, and your own dreams.

You are meant for so much more than just being someone's dinner."

The Action: Don't try to "stop being nice" — that's too big. Just notice. How often do you offer yourself before anyone asks? How many "yes"s flew out before you could ask "Do I actually want this?" Leave the platter in the kitchen today.

The Shadow: The scariest thing in this card is the smile. No terror. No pain. Just a flirtatious acceptance of her fate. Being devoured means being wanted. Being seen. Being the center of attention — even if it's on a chopping block. You never ask: “Do I want to be eaten?” You only ask: “Do I taste good enough?”

The 4th card from the "Comfort Zone" section

The Principle: The dissolution of connection with reality. Complete immersion in your own "good" — so complete that another's "bad" ceases to exist as something requiring a response. Comfort zone becomes insensitivity zone.

Symbolism:

Happy company — light, carefree environment; the "Life is a celebration" mindset

Sinking ship — a real-life event being completely ignored

No reaction to the disaster — social and psychological anesthesia toward anything that could spoil the celebration of life

Champagne, smiles, cruise — the aesthetic of well-being

Visual contrast between what's happening on deck and overboard — total division of worlds into "mine" and "not mine"

The Message:

This card terrifies because it's normal. These aren't villains. They just don't want to ruin their evening. But numbness has a price.

One day your ship will sink. And you'll pray someone notices. But they'll be drinking champagne. Saying: "Not my business."

The Action: Turn your head. Just turn it. Don't jump in the water. Don't save them. Just look. See that there are people out there, overboard. People just like you. Ask: "If my well-being is built on not seeing someone else's pain, what kind of well-being is that?"

The Shadow: You're not evil. You're just comfortable. And comfort makes a great alibi. You don't push people away — you just forget to look. But forgetting to look is how we become the ones no one sees when we're drowning.

The 3th card from the "Exeptionalism" section

The Principle: Elevating the ordinary to the sacred. Compensating for the fear of being average by inflating tiny differences into proof of uniqueness. Using external status (the "gilt frame") to mask empty content. Creating a cult out of the commonplace.

Symbolism:

Carrot in a portrait — an ordinary object, with the microscopic, often invented "difference" that supposedly proves exceptionalism demanding to be seen as art

Extravagant frame + aristocratic suit — applied status; forcing significance onto the mundane

Gap between frame and content — the distance between grand pretensions and humble reality

3.ONE OF A KIND

Museum presentation — self-worth detached from real life, placed in a sterile space of "contemplation"

Message: You're so afraid of being ordinary that you've declared ordinariness genius. But the frame doesn't make the carrot unique. It makes it ridiculous. The tragedy? You can't see it.

The Action: Take off the frame. Just mentally. Look at what's inside. No gilt. No costume. No pretension. Ask: "What's left of it when the frame is gone?"

The Shadow: You've forgotten what was inside before you dressed it up. Now the frame matters more than content. The pose matters more than meaning. But emptiness in gold is still emptiness. It just sparkles while starving.

The 6th card from the "Soma" section

The Principle: Physical rejection. Incompatibility. Spasm. Gag reflex. The urge to pull away, spit out, expel. A protective mechanism that kicks in when boundaries have been violated so deeply that the only way to survive is to vomit it out.

Origins:

Prolonged contact with what feels "dirty," "polluting" — physically or morally

Having to endure touches, smells, tastes, or presence of repulsive people

Violence — especially sexual — after which the body encodes disgust as protection

Forced participation in acts that violate core values — the body expels what the psyche can't digest

Living in environments where the norm was what deeply repulsed you (crime, depravity, cruelty, hypocrisy)

Transgenerational transmission — ancestors' disgust living in your body as an unexplained reaction

Triggers:

Specific smells; touches; certain foods, textures, colors; voices, tones, words

Situations where you again must tolerate what sickened you before

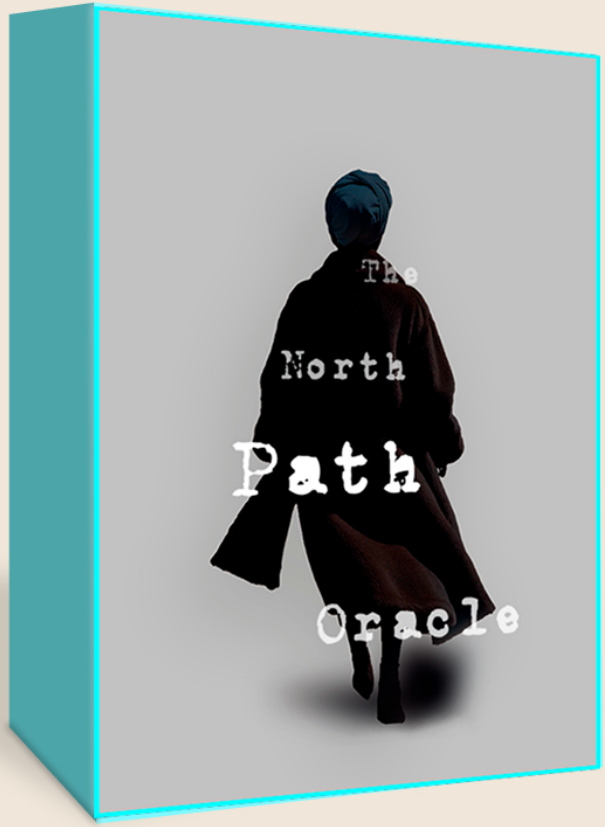
Boundary violations — even small ones

Having to do something "to be polite"

The Message: I can't swallow it. My body knows before I can think. I don't choose this reaction. It chooses me.

The Action: When disgust comes, don't suppress it. Don't tell yourself it's not rational. Let your body do what it needs to do. Expel. Purge. Then say: "My body knows how to protect me. I trust it."

Packaging design



Card Back Design

Copyright & Creation Model

A legally clear product for the international market

Nature of the project: Hybrid synthesis (AI + author's graphics).

Creative process:

- Original concept: Unique prompts for 60 cards (composition, symbolism) — my intellectual property.
- AI (Shedevrum): A tool for generating "raw" material (commercial license included).
- Deep reworking (Adobe Photoshop): The key stage of authorship (photomontage, hand-drawing details, color grading, artifact removal). ~85% of cards underwent deep revision.

Legal status:

- Authorship: Exclusive rights to the final images under the Berne Convention (creative transformation).
- Chain of title: Full commercial usage rights for AI-generated source material from Shedevrum.
- Legal purity: No third-party copyright elements; no additional licensing fees required.
- Verification: Original prompts and Photoshop layers are preserved.

Included: 60 images, guidebook (EN concept), documentation for the legal department.

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Thank You!